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ABSTRACT

This book examines the efforts of Valley Interfaith--a community-based organization in the south Texas borderlands--to improve the living conditions of low-income residents and immigrants and the public schools their children attend. Valley Interfaith is unusual in that it crosses the boundary separating the worlds of community organizing and school reform. It demonstrates how community organizing can catalyze the work of school reform, while transformations in a school can give a community a locus for civic engagement. Social capital theory provides the framework guiding this study. Valley Faith originated in the efforts of Catholic clergy and organizers from the Industrial Areas Foundation to create an organization addressing the lack of political power, inequities in school funding, and poor living conditions among south Texas residents. Case studies are presented of three schools that collaborated with Valley Interfaith and struggled to increase parental engagement, address community needs, and achieve high levels of academic success. The final chapter analyzes the success of these three schools in terms of scores on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), other forms of social improvement, and the hidden costs of social capitalization. An appendix summarizes TAAS data for the three schools. (Contains 162 references, chapter notes, and an index.) (SV)

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